Siobhan Burns

Journal 6- Whoa what a ride.

Six weeks ago, if someone would have told me that they thought I might enjoy teaching a group of eighth graders, I would have told them they were wrong. I know I’ve had this conversation with Mr.Sievek and others before, but I just have this aversion to younger children. It’s weird that I still hold this aversion considering I thoroughly enjoy having my younger cousins around, when they’re behaving, and I loved tutoring at Mankato East Junior High so much that I went over the hours I needed. I had previously thought that in order to teach what I desired to teach, in the manner that I wanted to, I would need to teach a high school class. After meeting three amazing groups of eighth graders at Dakota Meadows, I’ve begun to rethink my position. These kids were beyond brilliant. Of course some of them struggled but overall these kids were so much smarter than what I thought “normal” eighth graders would be. They were so creative and energetic and excited to learn that I got excited to teach every time I saw them, even if I was nervous and even though world history isn’t exactly my strong point. They were also respectful and kind. These kids were so patient with those students who required more time to read things or catch on to certain topics that it warmed my heart. Even though it’s safe to assume there was drama going on in the hallways in between class, they didn’t bring it into the classroom. They were so nice to each other and so respectful of us as teachers. I could go on and on about the students we had but I learned a lot from Mrs. Kennedy too.

While I do wish that we could have gotten the chance to observe Mrs. Kennedy teach a full lesson before we did anything, it was kind of nice to just jump right in. The fact that we got to start teaching right away meant that we got to see the students grow and learn as a direct result of what we were teaching. We had no idea if we teaching in a similar fashion or style to Mrs. Kennedy and whether or not they would respond differently to us. She taught me that it is always good to have a back-up plan. If your lesson doesn’t take as long as you thought it would you better have something to occupy the rest of the class period. Because of her, and this experience, I will now keep plenty of extra materials in my classroom just in case things don’t go according to plan. Getting through all of the information is not as important as making sure your students are engaged; just another thing I learned from Mrs. Kennedy. I had been so focused on making sure we got all of the necessary points in that I wasn’t focused enough on whether or not the students were fully engaged sometimes. The fact that Mrs. Kennedy allowed us the opportunity to write out an assignment/lesson that she would use in the future and that other teachers liked it so much they wanted to use it as well, let me know that there are so many people willing to help you succeed in this field. That Mrs. Kennedy believed that we could take an idea she randomly had and turn it into a lesson on the importance of communication, made me feel like I am really ready to do this.

I also learned that even when I’m nervous, I need to be willing to get right into it and move around the room, speak above my shaky-nervous feeling, and power through the lesson. The students depend on me to gain the knowledge necessary to complete their projects, do well on their tests, and feel as though they actually gained something out of their time with me and whether or not I’m nervous, I need to deliver.

I learned so much from this experience that I don’t think one journal is enough to cover it. I don’t think a few days are enough to cover it. I will be reflecting on this experience and using what I learned for a long time. Getting the opportunity to go into the classroom and teach these kids is something I’ll never forget. Of course there were a few things that I would change if I could. I would videotape and have Mr. Sievek observe our second lesson rather than our third as I feel like that one was pretty awesome. I would’ve taken more time to get to know the kids who didn’t talk as much in class instead of the ones who did.